



True Issues[®]

February 2025

Contents

<u>Key findings</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>What are the issues Australians care about?</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>How does the Australian Government perform on top issues?</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>How are government, business and industry performing?</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Are we headed in the right direction?</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Survey methodology</u>	<u>21</u>



Living costs, housing and healthcare lead priorities as antisemitic attacks bring extremism back onto the public radar

In February 2025, heading into the March Budget and federal election campaign, **cost of living** remains the dominant issue Australians want the Federal Government to focus on. Unprompted, almost six in ten adults (58%) name cost of living in their top three most important issues or concerns and eight in ten (80%) select it in their top five from a prompted list – both in line with November 2024 results.

Hospitals and healthcare and **housing supply and affordability** remain the next most important issues (51% and 48% prompted mentions, respectively). Amid continued limited supply of homes to buy and rent and worsening affordability, housing remains the second highest unprompted issue (30%), ahead of hospitals and healthcare (24%).

These two priorities continue to divide along generational lines with a majority of 18 to 34 year olds still looking for government action on housing, while a majority of those aged 35 years and over prioritise healthcare. The related area of aged care is a top five concern for almost four in ten older adults (55 years and older).

The **economy and finances** remains a key issue across all age groups but is slightly less of a priority than three months ago (34% prompted mentions, down from 39% in November), amid expectations of an easing of the interest rates and inflation which have been making life more difficult for so many Australians.

Employment and wages (28%) and **interest rates** (27%) remain a top five issue for more than one in four adults, followed closely by the **environment and climate change** (25%).

More 18 to 34 year olds are concerned about employment and wages and interest rates than about the economy, as their dream of home ownership slips further from reach. Interest rates are a top five concern for both 18 to 34 and 35 to 54 year olds.

Notably, while still low-level overall, the issue of **terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism** (16%) has bounced back to previous levels after a decline in November (10%, down from 15% in August). This likely reflects widespread coverage and public debate around recent antisemitic attacks across Sydney and Melbourne.

Overall, one in three Australians (33%) think their **personal situation** is heading in the right direction and one in four believe they are heading in the wrong direction (25%), similar to three months ago. As seen in previous quarters, higher income and home ownership help drive greater confidence about the future.

Heading into its campaign for re-election, the **Australian Government's** performance continues to rate below 'average' (i.e. an index score below 50), both overall and across most individual issues measured. Its overall performance index score remains unchanged from three months ago at 45, lower than the previous Morrison Government's score of 47 prior to its May 2022 election loss.

Since November, Government performance has declined across half of the issues measured, most markedly on **terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism** (index score of 46, down five points) – an indication of public sentiment toward its recent antisemitism response – and on **population growth** (index score of 41, down three points).

Support for potential cost of living responses as Government fails to gain traction on living costs and other voter priorities

The only (very slight) improvement for the Albanese Government has occurred on interest rates, likely buoyed by recent speculation of a February cash rate cut by the RBA.

However, **cost of living** (index score of 24), **housing supply and affordability** (index score of 27), **interest rates** (index score of 36), **the economy and finances** and **hospitals and healthcare** (index scores of 40 for each) remain the Government's poorest performing areas.

Potential policy responses to the cost of living crisis, which attract the highest levels of community support, include:

- Increasing medications / subsidies available on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme (PBS) (78%, including 45% 'strongly support')
- More aggressive ACCC powers to tackle collusion and price gouging by major retailers (77%, including 50% 'strongly support').

These are followed by water / environmental reforms toward more cost effective and competitive food production (74% support, including 33% 'strongly support'), then greater personal income tax relief (67% support), more new airlines in the Australian market to increase competition (67% support), and more energy subsidies to reduce household power bills (63% support).

Notably, income tax relief resonates more strongly than average among those whose number one concern is cost of living and those who rate government response to cost of living as 'very poor'.

Confidence in the **national economy** remains low. More than twice as many Australians continue to see this heading in the wrong direction (42%) as see it heading in the right direction (19%). This net difference (-23) is only slightly improved since November (-25, the worst result recorded on this measure since *True Issues*[®] began in June 2013).

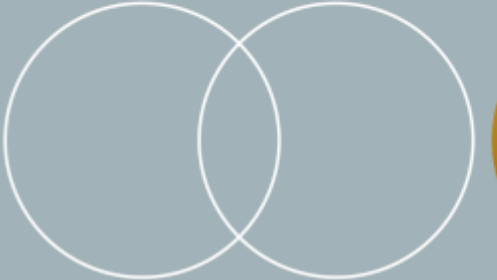
Australians continue to be more positive about **business and industry** (index score of 53), rating its performance ahead of all levels of government. However, a similar proportion of adults see business heading in the wrong direction (23%) as in the right direction (22%).

At state level, rated performance of the **SA and WA Governments** remains most positive (index scores of 56 and 55, respectively) and more residents continue see these state economies as heading in the right direction than in the wrong direction. While **NSW Government** performance also rates above 'average' (index score of 53), more NSW residents see their state economy as heading in the wrong direction, than in the right direction.

Both the **Queensland and Victorian Governments** continue to rate below 'average' (index scores of 48 and 40, respectively) and more residents continue to see these state economies as heading in the wrong direction than in the right direction.

There remains some optimism at community-level, with **local council** performance rated 'average' (index score of 50) but more Australians still of the view that their **local community** is heading in the right direction (28%) than heading in the wrong direction (22%).

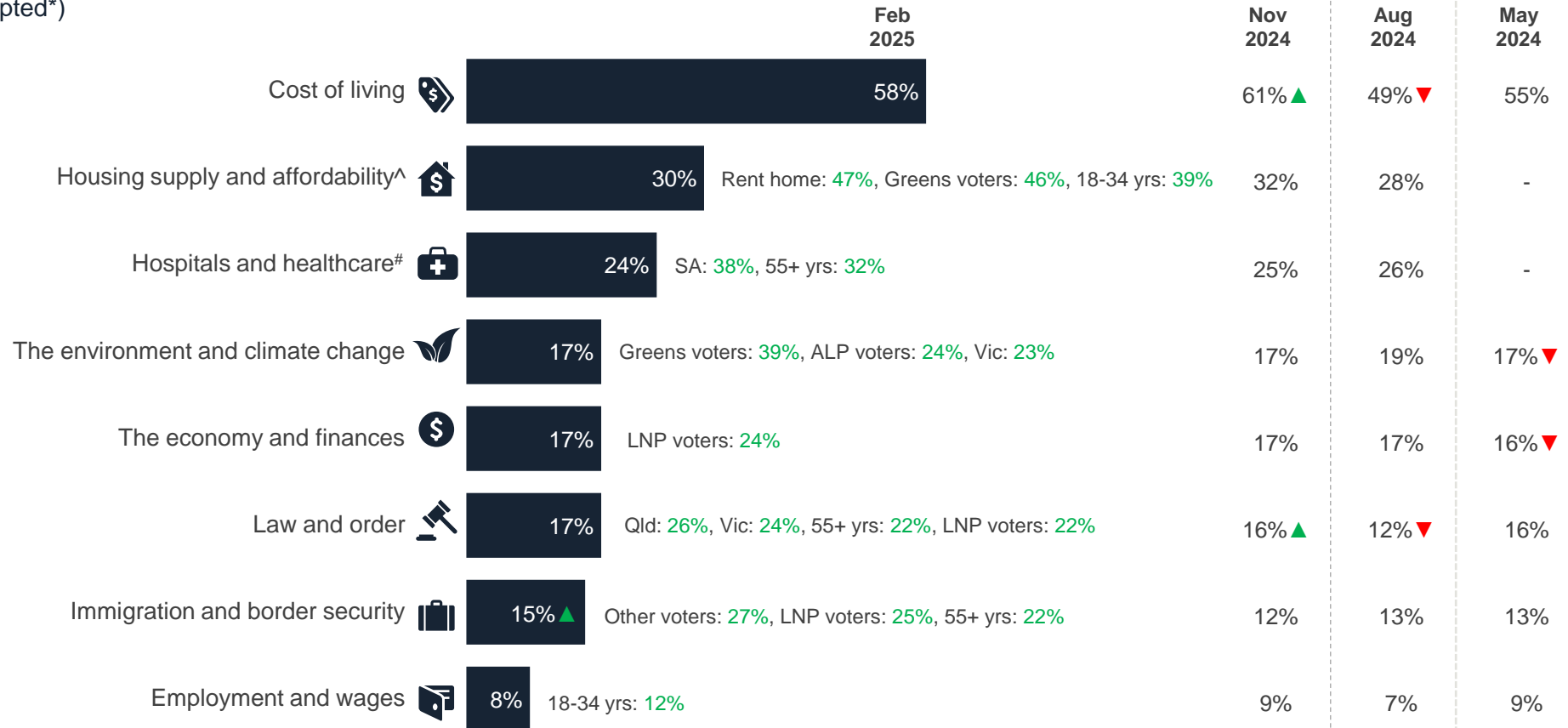
What are the issues Australians care about?



Cost of living concerns top of mind for a majority of Australians followed by housing and healthcare

Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on

(Up to 3 issues – unprompted*)



*Note: Issues mentioned among less than 8% not shown. ^Previously 'Housing and interest rates'. #Previously 'Hospitals, healthcare and ageing'.

Significantly higher than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.

Significantly ▲ higher / ▼ lower than previous True Issues wave at the 95% confidence interval.

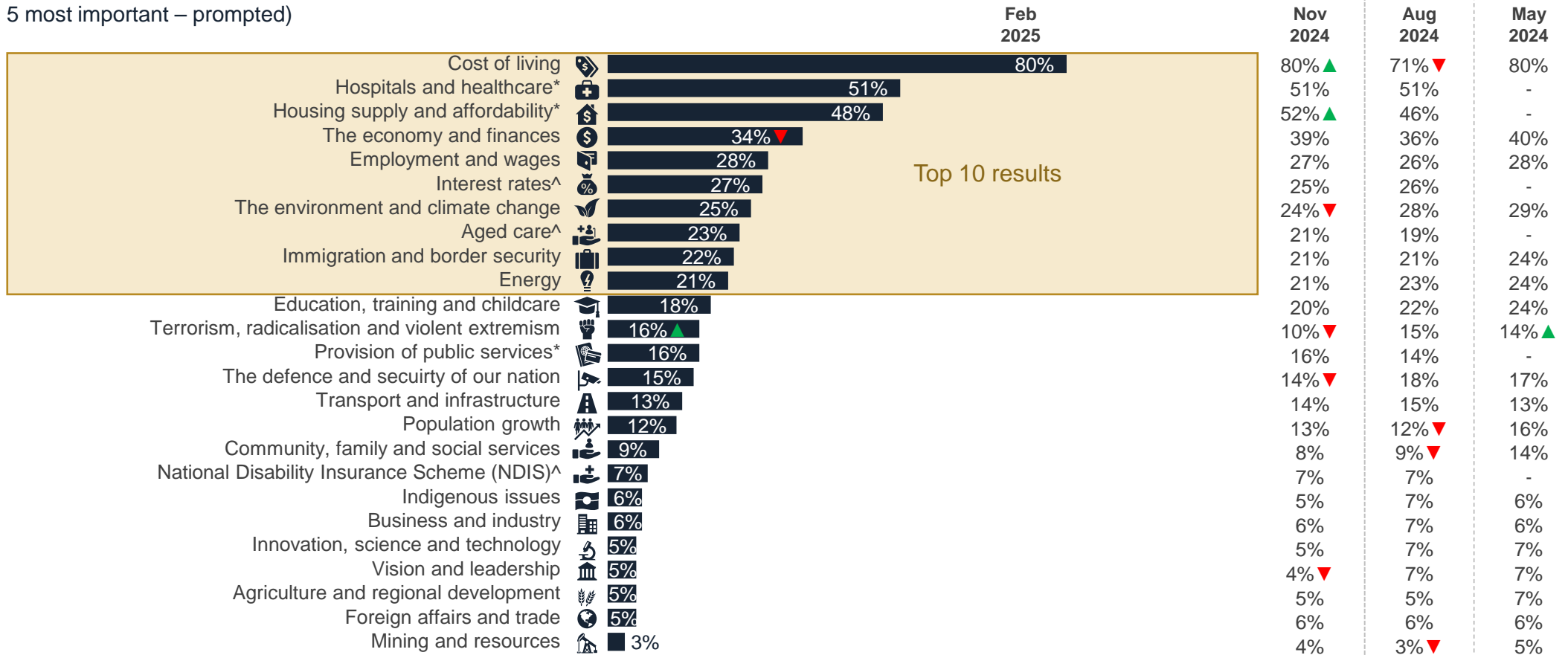
Q. What are the most important issues that you think the Australian Government should focus on? These would be the issues or problems that personally interest or concern you the most.

Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave).

Living costs, healthcare and housing top prompted community concerns but more want greater focus on violent extremism

Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on

(Top 5 most important – prompted)



^Added in August 2024. *Previously 'Housing and interest rates', 'Hospitals, healthcare and ageing', 'Provision of public services (e.g. Centrelink, Medicare, NDIS, the ATO, passports and immigration, employment and other support services, etc.)'.

Significantly ▲ higher / ▼ lower than previous True Issues wave at the 95% confidence level.

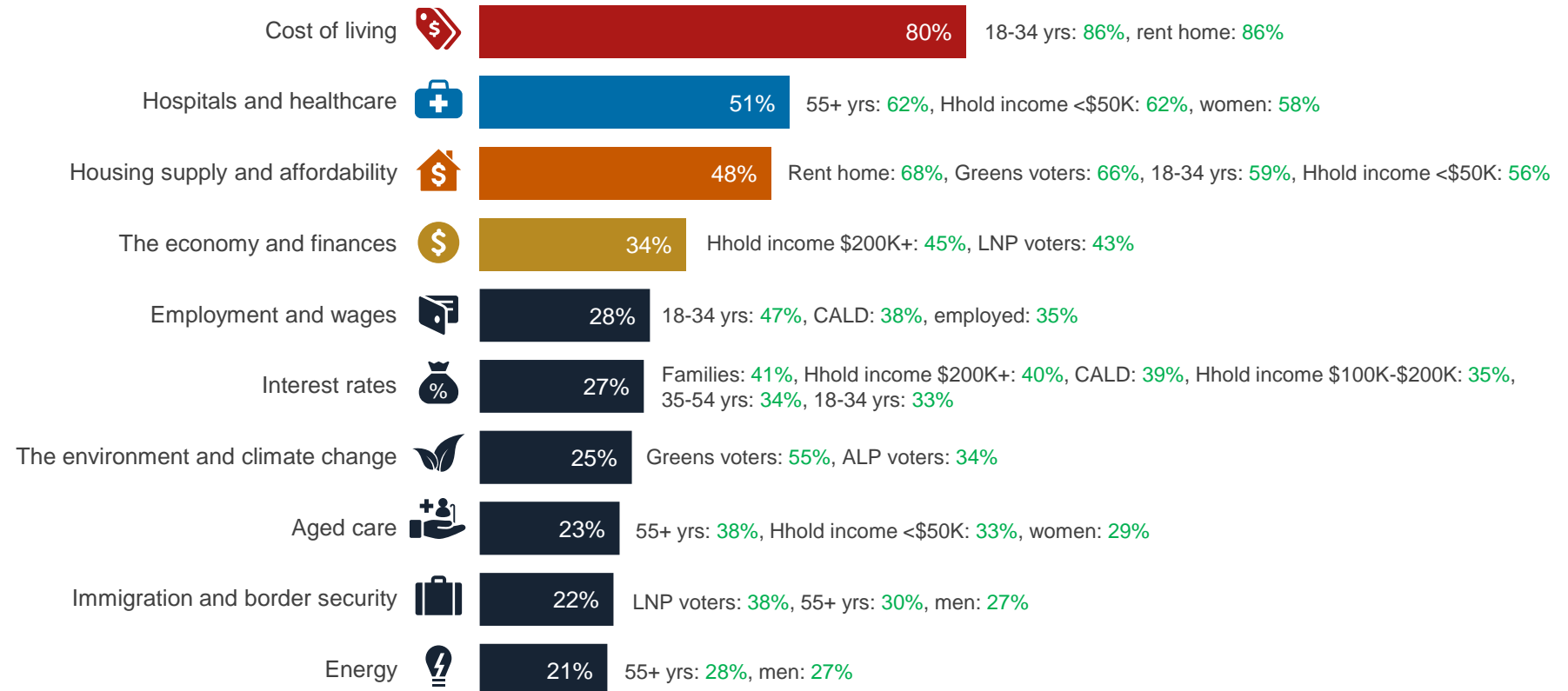
Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.

Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave).

Living costs the lead concern across all groups but a majority of young adults want action on housing, older adults on healthcare

Highest ranked issues the Australian Government should focus on

(Top 5 most important – prompted)



Significantly *higher* than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.

Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.

Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Australians under pressure from rising living costs and concerned about healthcare access and affordability

Key issues or concerns about **cost of living** and **hospitals and healthcare** – selected verbatims

“Cost of living is the worst I can remember. Everything costs a fortune. Just think about the term - ‘cost of living’. It’s literally too expensive just to be alive in this country.”

“I am having to be careful with my buying, supplementing my living from my savings.”

“Rent has increased, electricity and other bills have increased, fuel and car costs have increased and I can’t afford food and basic necessities.”

“Food prices are stopping people from being able to eat proper diets and insurance premiums are becoming unaffordable – and health cover is essential to save tax and also unaffordable. Everyone’s quality of life is becoming a survival technique.”

“The rising cost of living has a domino effect on everyone and many issues. If people cannot afford to spend money that impacts on suppliers. Risks people not eating seasonal fruit and vegetables, therefore a health risk. Children going to school with no lunch has social and learning impacts.”

“Everything is too expensive. It is hard to make ends meet and my children will have no hope.”

“It directly impacts my life and my wellbeing. The cost of living is far too high to live a meaningful life and the consequences... mental wellbeing, physical health, housing, ability to afford medical care and personal care, ability to give back to businesses and so much more.”

“I hear of too many people waiting so long for treatments that I’d consider essential, such as cancer and heart issues. Regional areas have doctors come and go so there is little consistency in treatment and every time a new doctor is appointed tests are repeated, often costing the patients, especially those who are aged or have permanent physical conditions and are therefore on low incomes. It’s frustrating and appalling. Even those who can afford care are waiting extremely long times for essential care.”

“Hospital and healthcare is needing to be a priority for government due to the rising issues to do with healthcare. Whether this be ambulance ramping, lack of access to healthcare, reduced amount of workers employed. This needs to change by employing more paramedics on the road, with an increased number of ambulance vehicles to provide more access to emergency help.”

“Population is growing, not enough public healthcare available in hospitals and emergency waits. Government needs to focus on the good work these healthcare workers do and for such a minimal wage. They need to have their pays increased substantially to encourage more to stay.”

“Concerns regarding number of beds, waiting times in ED and for specialist appointments. Concern regarding nurses’ welfare. Increased number of nurses per ward. Better use / education for public regarding urgent vs ED.”

“Hospitals in my area are very understaffed causing huge wait times, also a lot of doctors are too expensive to see and have procedures done so many go without because they simply cannot afford it.”

Q. Please tell us a little about why a focus on [FIRST ISSUE SELECTED / ‘MOST IMPORTANT IN Q3’] is most important to you.
What are your key issues or concerns about this, at the moment? How do things need to change?
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Australians frustrated with housing supply and affordability and concerned about the health of our economy

Key issues or concerns about housing supply and affordability and the economy and finances – selected verbatims

“I fear for the future generations of Australians as housing becomes increasingly more unaffordable. Australians will be forced to live in tiny apartments... and by live, I mean rent.”

“People deserve to live comfortably without having to keep moving every year because the rent keeps increasing very high or the owner selling it. People don't deserve to live with anxiety because of this issue!”

“We cannot be active citizens if we have nowhere to rest, recharge and nourish ourselves.”

“There is currently a house crisis in which the population living here finds it difficult to secure housing – long term, i.e. mortgages in order to find security. This will affect future generations and have an impact potentially on family life as people will feel less secure.”

“Since purchasing a house is now impossible for many and rentals are in very short supply and too expensive and insecure, we need a complete overhaul of the system.”

“Homeless people living on the streets and in cars while the banks reap in billions of dollars monthly.”

“Having to rent is frightening. I never feel secure and live with my daughter because I could never afford a place on my own. We just want a place of our own.”

“Many people I know are moving back in with parents or renting with others due to the cost of housing nowadays. Also, the state of housing developments nowadays are dire - narrow streets, houses packed as closely together as possible, buildings that are not suited to Australian conditions (e.g. poor insulation, structural materials).”

“A strong economy gives people confidence, and they will start spending again, benefiting the whole country.”

“The economy needs to be stronger to cope with strong competition from overseas, China in particular. With a strong economy the rest should come – housing, welfare, etc.”

“Paying down the deficit and managing the country's economy is extremely important to ensure the country remains fluid and able to ward off future situations that threaten to destabilise the Australian way of life.”

“Our money is not being managed well, the AUD is in free fall, we are literally being run by a monopoly. Lack of competition means that our economy is going to custard. Small business is what drives economic growth.”

“The economy is of concern to all Australians, particularly as our interest payments on borrowings just don't seem to be improving much, if at all.”

“Not having debt is a sign of a healthy economy. A healthy economy means better living standards and a better country to live in.”

Q. Please tell us a little about why a focus on [FIRST ISSUE SELECTED / 'MOST IMPORTANT IN Q3'] is most important to you. What are your key issues or concerns about this, at the moment? How do things need to change?
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

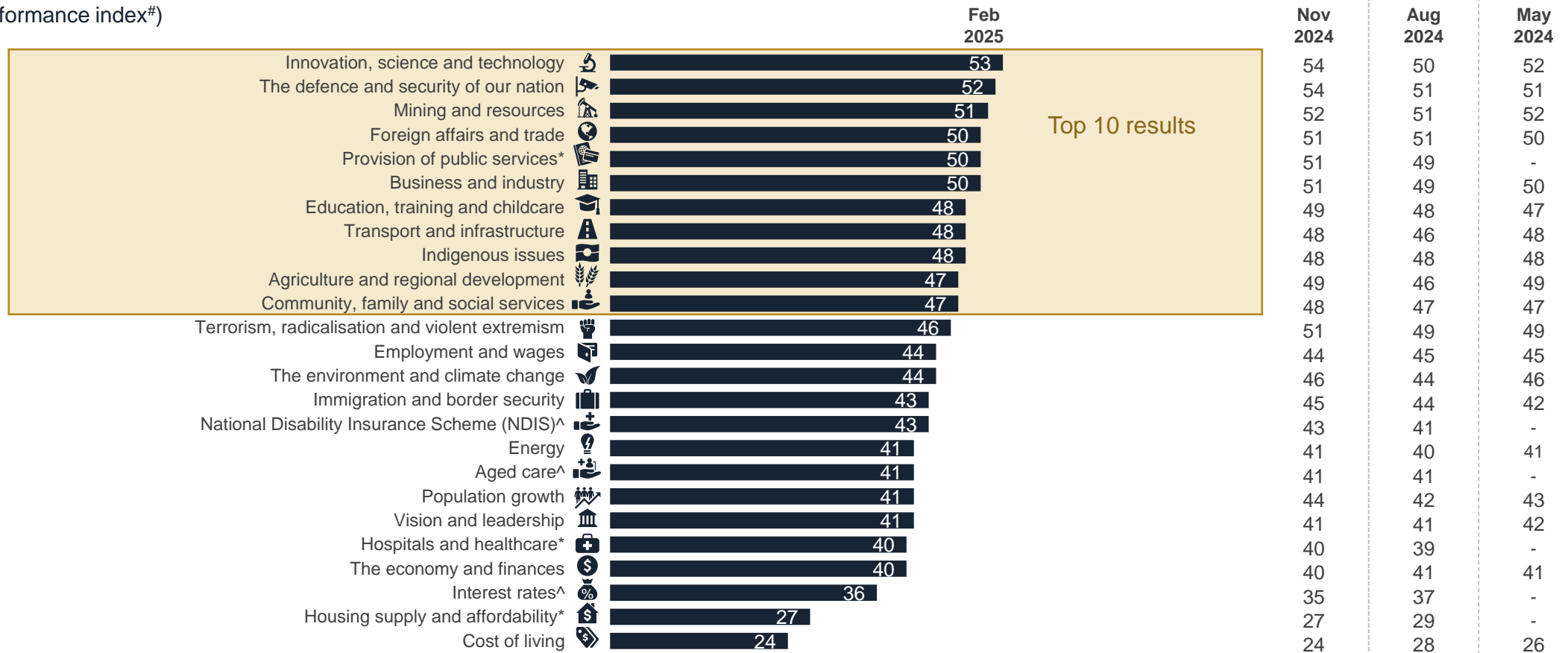
How does the Australian Government perform on top issues?



Government slightly improves performance on interest rates but declines on extremism, population and many other issues

Australian Government performance on issues

(Performance index#)



#For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report

^Added in August 2024. *Previously 'Hospitals, healthcare and ageing', 'Housing and interest rates', 'Provision of public services (e.g. Centrelink, Medicare, NDIS, the ATO, passports and immigration, employment and other support services, etc.)'.

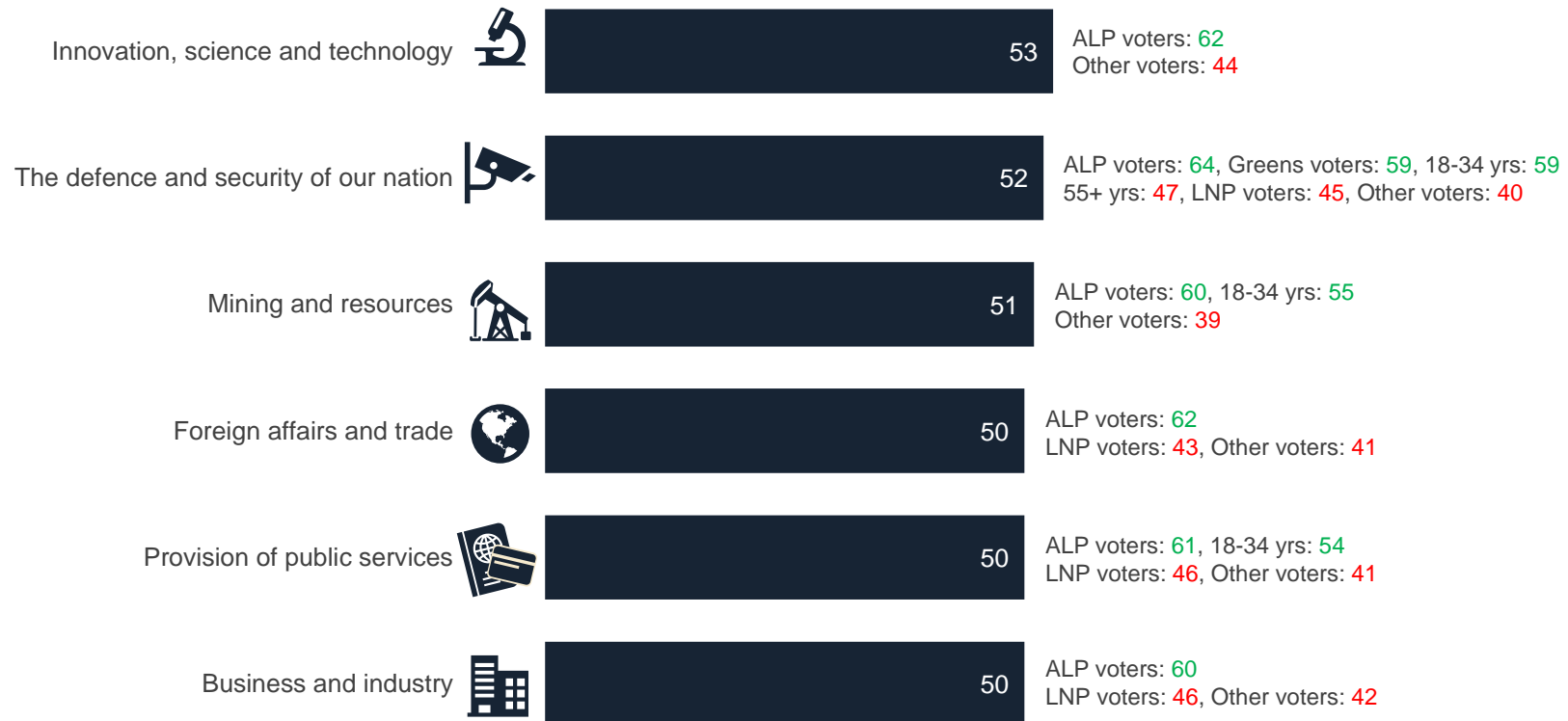
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave).

ALP voters and young adults more positive of Government performance on key issues

Top ranked issues for Australian Government performance

(Performance index#)



#For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.

Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.

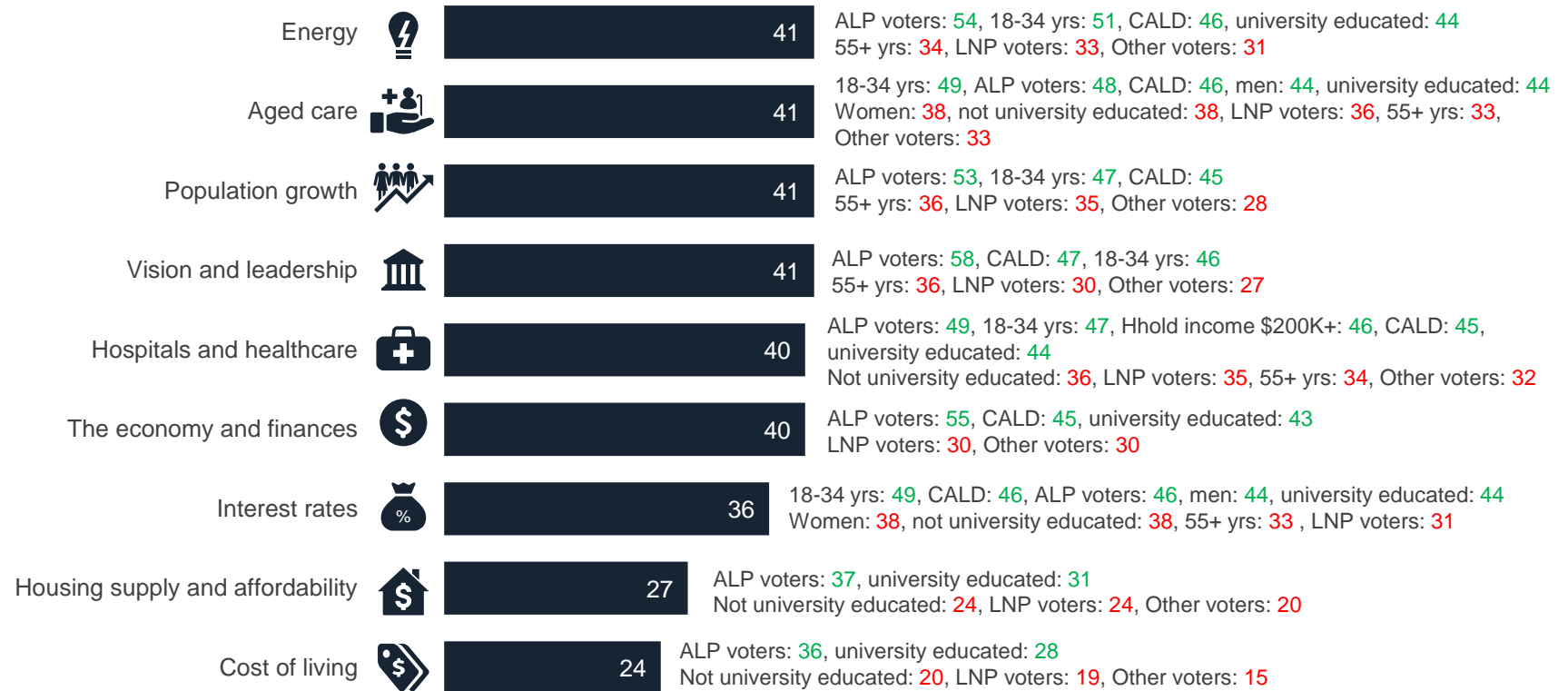
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

LNP and minor party (excl. Green) voters and older adults more critical of Government performance on key issues

Bottom ranked issues for Australian Government performance

(Performance index#)



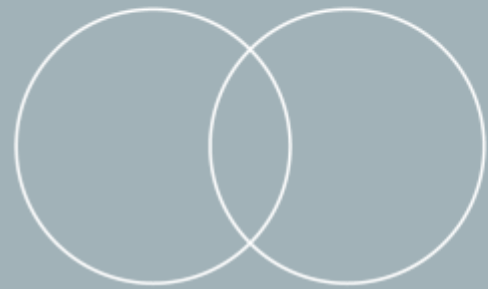
#For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.

Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.

Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

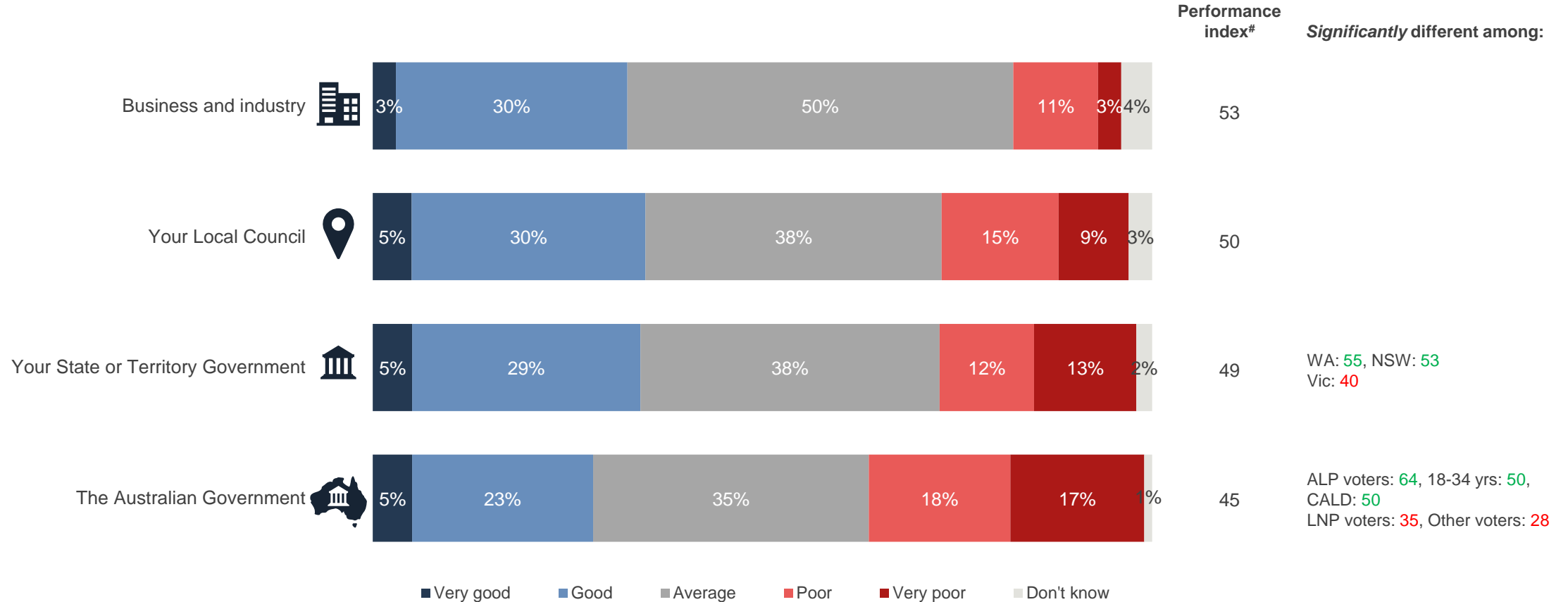
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

How are government, business and industry performing?



Business viewed as outperforming all levels of government

Performance of organisations and groups in Australia

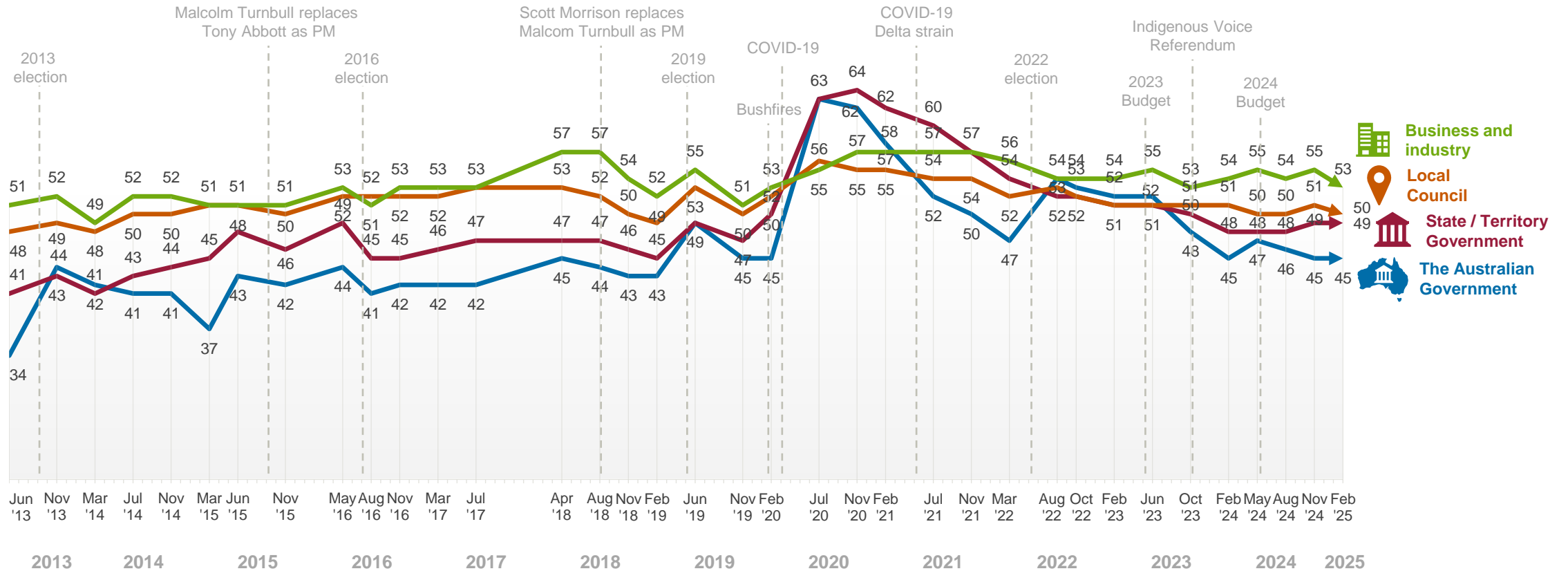


#For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the research methodology section of this report.
Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Federal and State / Territory Government performance stable amid slight declines for business and local government

Performance of organisations and groups in Australia

(Performance index#)



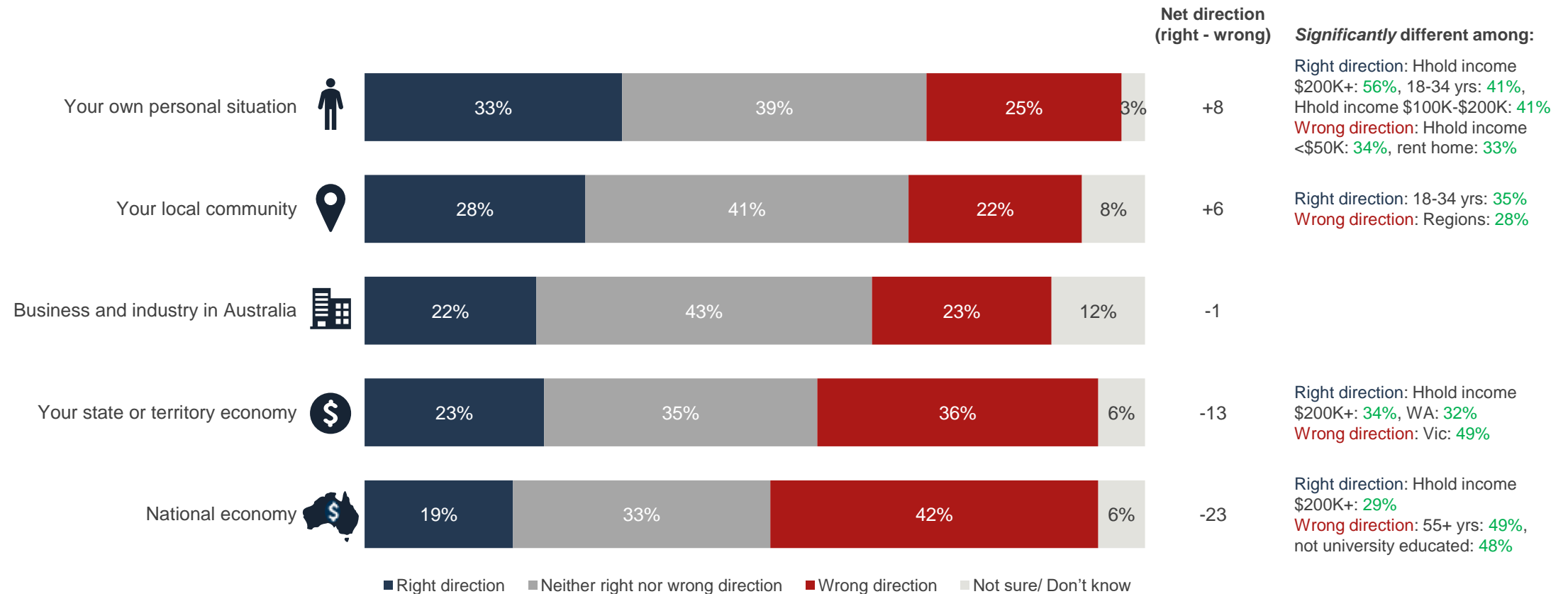
#For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.
 Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?
 Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

Are we headed in the right direction?



Many see national economy heading in wrong direction but greater optimism about own situation and community

Direction of organisations and groups in Australia

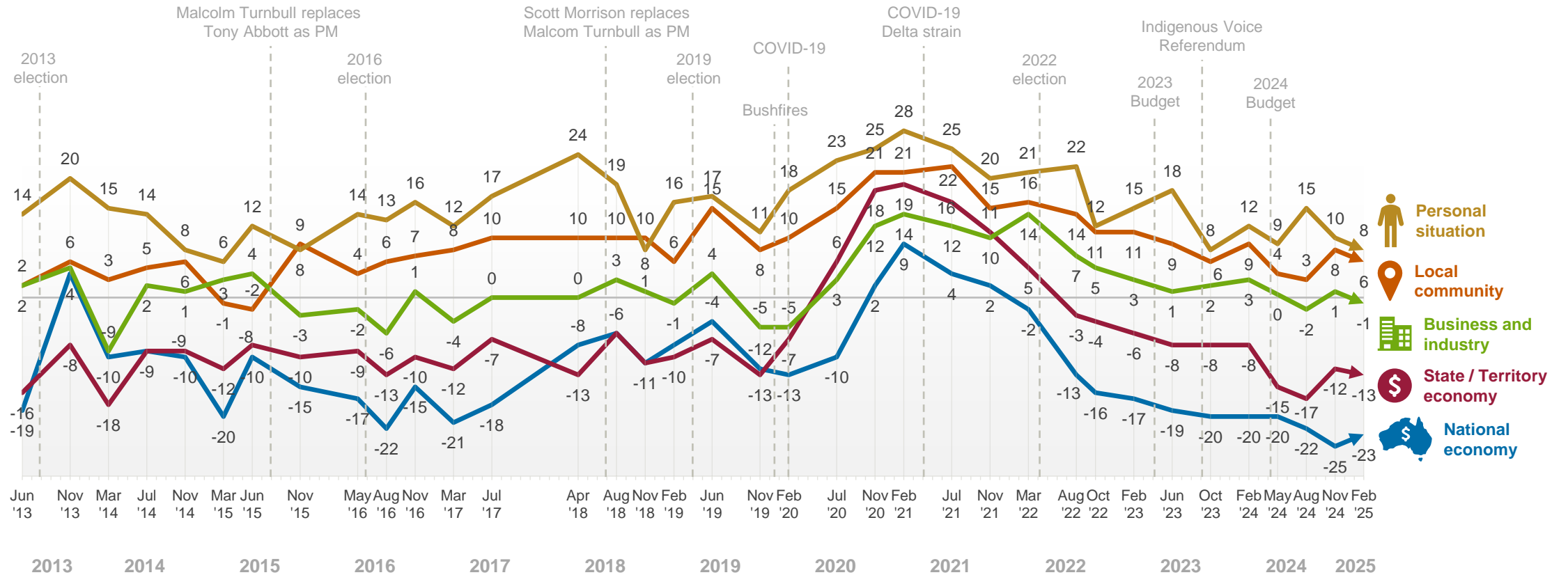


Significantly **higher** than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
 Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Pessimism remains around national economy despite a slight bounce back from November series low

Direction of organisations and groups in Australia

Net direction trend (% right direction - % wrong direction)



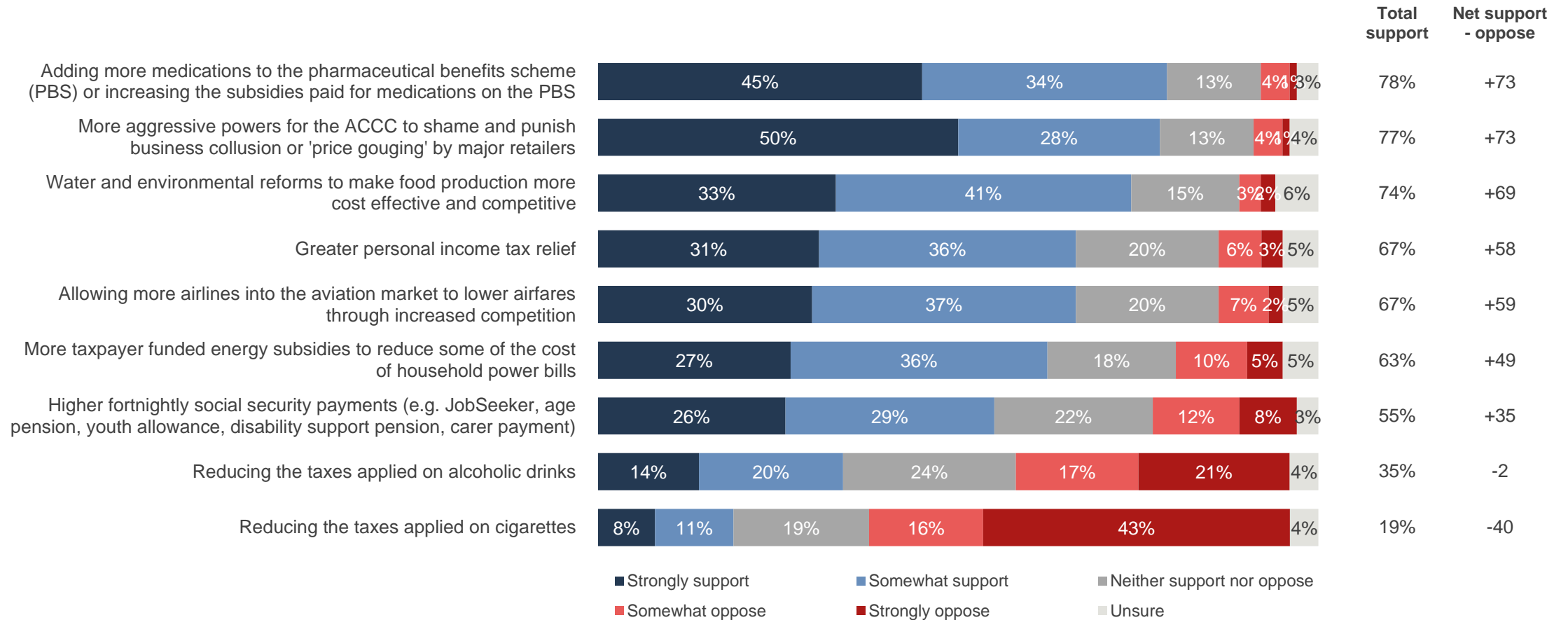
Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?
 Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

How should policymakers respond to cost of living pressures?



Strong support for greater PBS benefits and increased ACCC powers to punish price gouging to help ease cost of living

Support for potential policy responses to cost of living pressures in Australia



Q. Do you support or oppose the following potential policy responses to cost of living pressures in Australia?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Tax relief resonates among those most concerned about cost of living and most critical of Government response so far

Support for potential policy responses to cost of living pressures in Australia

Total support (strongly + somewhat)

Significantly different among:

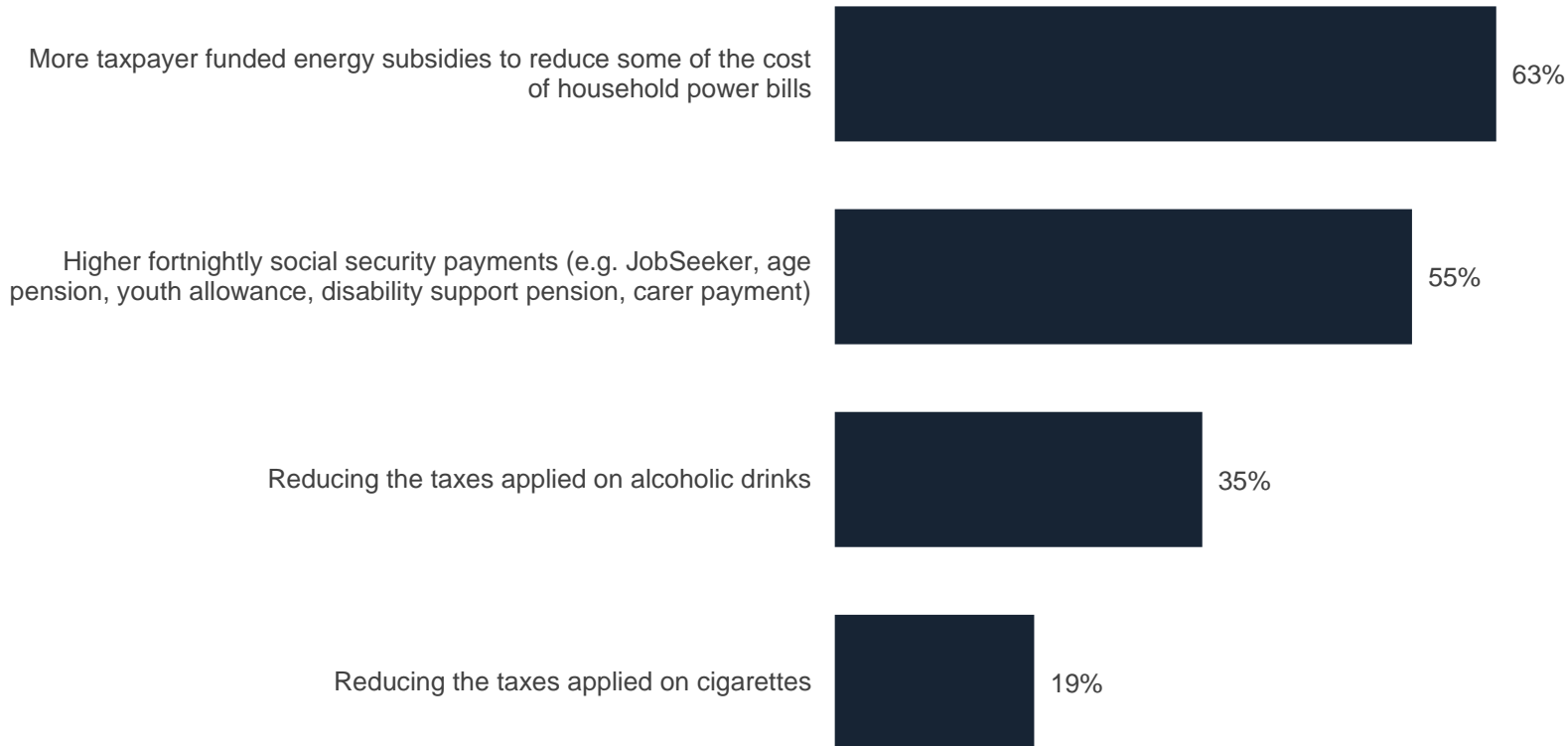


Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
 Q. Do you support or oppose the following potential policy responses to cost of living pressures in Australia?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Energy subsidies to reduce household power bills resonates among those most concerned about cost of living

Support for potential policy responses to cost of living pressures in Australia (cont'd)

Total support (strongly + somewhat)



Significantly different among:

ALP voters: **78%**, cost of living top issue (prompted + unprompted): **70%**
LNP voters: **55%**

Hhold income <\$50K: **71%**, ALP voters: **67%**, Greens voters: **67%**, rent home: **67%**, Hhold income \$50K-\$75K: **65%**, regions: **62%**
Own home: **49%**, employed: **48%**, Hhold income \$100K-\$200K: **44%**, LNP voters: **44%**, Hhold income \$200K+: **41%**

Hhold income \$50K-\$75K: **45%**, Men: **44%**, Hhold income \$100K-\$200K: **41%**
Women: **26%**

Men: **23%**
Women: **15%**

Significantly **higher** / **lower** than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
Q. Do you support or oppose the following potential policy responses to cost of living pressures in Australia?
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Survey methodology

National Online Survey

n=1,000 Australian adults

- Conducted Friday 31st January – Tuesday 4th February 2025.
- Sample quotas on age, gender and location with post-survey weighting to actual age / gender / location proportions from Census data.
- Maximum margin of error on n=1,000 is +/-3.1% at the 95% confidence level.
- Differences of +/-1% for net scores are due to rounding.



The research was conducted in compliance with AS-ISO 20252.

Explanation of index scores:

To facilitate ease of reporting and comparison of results over time, an **index score** has been calculated for performance measures (*very good* to *very poor* ratings).

The index score is represented as a score out of 100.


To calculate this score, the **survey percentage result** for each scale category (excluding 'don't know' responses) is multiplied by an **index factor** to produce an **index value** for each category. These values are then summed to produce the **index score**, equating to 43 in this example.


Rating category	Survey percentage	Index factor	Index value (percentage x factor)
Very good	5%	100	5
Good	17%	75	13
Average	40%	50	20
Poor	19%	25	5
Very poor	15%	0	0
Don't know	4%	-	-
Index score			43



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in Australia...

Find out what they're thinking.

 **Contact us**
03 8685 8555

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@JWSResearch

John Scales
Founder
jscales@jwsresearch.com

Mark Zuker
Managing Director
mzucker@jwsresearch.com

Katrina Cox
Director of Client Services
kcox@jwsresearch.com

Jessica Lai
Senior Research Director
jlai@jwsresearch.com

Tom Cameron
Business Development Manager
tcameron@jwsresearch.com

jwsresearch.com
+61 3 8685 8555